

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for use in treating an airway condition of a patient, said apparatus comprising:
 - a handle sized to be hand-grasped by an operator and having an actuator to be selectively actuated by said operator;
 - a cartridge having:
 - an implant of biocompatible material sized to be embedded within a tissue of said airway;
 - a needle having a distal tip for penetrating into said tissue, said needle having an axially extending bore;
 - said implant disposed within said bore at said distal tip;
 - said cartridge having a proximal end adapted to be coupled to said handle for said implant to be ejected from said distal tip upon actuation of said actuator.
2. An apparatus according to claim 1 further comprising:
 - an obturator disposed for slideable movement within said bore of said needle;
 - said actuator including a driver positioned to move said obturator toward said implant upon actuation of said actuator.
3. An apparatus according to claim 2 wherein:
 - said obturator is carried within said bore of said needle for movement therewith when said cartridge is uncoupled from said handle.
4. An apparatus according to claim 2 wherein said driver is positioned to be slideably received within said bore when said cartridge is coupled to said handle.

5. An apparatus according to claim 1 further comprising:
 - said handle having a handle coupling having a predetermined geometry;
 - said proximal end of said cartridge having a cartridge coupling with a mating geometry to mate with said predetermined geometry with said cartridge and handle aligned for said implant to be ejected from said distal tip upon actuation of said actuator.
6. An apparatus according to claim 5 further comprising a release for releasing said cartridge from said handle.
7. An apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said implant is adapted to alter a dynamic response of said tissue following placement of said implant in said tissue.
8. An apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said implant includes a material for promoting tissue in-growth into said implant following placement of said implant into said tissue.
9. An apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said implant is sized slightly greater than said bore for said implant to expand upon ejection from said bore.
10. An apparatus according to claim 8 wherein said implant is formed of multiple fibers including fibers of said material for promoting tissue in-growth.
11. An apparatus according to claim 10 wherein the multiple fibers are twisted together along a length of the implant with the fibers having terminal ends at opposite ends of the implant.

12. An apparatus according to claim 10 wherein the multiple fibers are braided together.
13. An apparatus according to claim 1 wherein at least said cartridge is contained within a sterile container.
14. A handle and cartridge kit for use in treating an airway condition of a patient, said apparatus comprising:
 - a handle sized to be hand-grasped by an operator and having an actuator to be selectively actuated by said operator;
 - a cartridge having:
 - an implant of biocompatible material sized to be embedded within a tissue of said airway;
 - a needle having a distal tip for penetrating into said tissue, said needle having an axially extending bore;
 - said implant disposed within said bore at said distal tip;
 - said cartridge having a proximal end adapted to be coupled to said handle for said implant to be ejected from said distal tip upon actuation of said actuator;
 - a common container containing said handle and said cartridge.
15. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 14 further comprising:
 - an obturator disposed for slideable movement within said bore of said needle;
 - said actuator including a driver positioned to move said obturator toward said implant upon actuation of said actuator.

16. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 15 wherein:
said obturator is carried within said bore of said needle for movement therewith when said cartridge is uncoupled from said handle.
17. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 15 wherein said driver is positioned to be slide-ably received within said bore when said cartridge is coupled to said handle.
18. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 14 further comprising:
said handle having a handle coupling having a predetermined geometry;
said proximal end of said cartridge having a cartridge coupling with a mating geometry to mate with said predetermined geometry with said cartridge and handle aligned for said implant to be ejected from said distal tip upon actuation of said actuator.
19. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 18 further comprising a release for releasing said cartridge from said handle.
20. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 14 wherein said implant is adapted to alter a dynamic response of said tissue following placement of said implant in said tissue.
21. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 14 wherein said implant includes a material for promoting tissue in-growth into said implant following placement of said implant into said tissue.
22. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 14 wherein said implant is sized slightly greater than said bore for said implant to expand upon ejection from said bore.

23. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 21 wherein said implant is formed of multiple fibers including fibers of said material for promoting tissue ingrowth.
24. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 23 wherein the multiple fibers are twisted together along a length of the implant with the fibers having terminal ends at opposite ends of the implant.
25. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 23 wherein the multiple fibers are braided together.
26. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 14 comprising:
a plurality of cartridges within said container.
27. A handle and cartridge kit according to claim 14 wherein said container is a sterile container.
28. An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the handle includes a pistol grip having a textured gripping surface.
29. An apparatus according to claim 28, wherein the textured gripping surface includes a plurality of generally parallel ribs.